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ABSTRACT

The needs of off-campus black and female students at McNeese State University, Louisiana, were surveyed. The sample of 25 students was randomly selected from more than 200 off-campus black students. Seventy percent of the sample wanted to live on campus but had limited funds. Only 5 percent felt that they had a full part in college activities, and 80 percent could not take part in extracurricular activities. Sixty percent felt that no special attention was being directed to meeting their needs as off-campus students, and 48 percent felt that the time spent commuting to campus influenced their studying time. It is suggested that the relationship between student and the university could be changed by increased use of computers, radio, videocassette recorders, and educational television. This program could be staffed by faculty members who serve in resource and instructional design roles. Development of curriculum materials by subject specialists who are acquainted with the student population is also important, as are student-instructor meetings for problem solving, discussion, and examinations. A combination of the best of traditional educational principles with innovative design and delivery approaches is recommended for nontraditional students. (SW)

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OFF-CAMPUS MINORITY STUDENTS

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OFF-CAMPUS MINORITY STUDENTS

An area of responsibility being carefully examined today by colleges and universities across the nation deals with the needs of non-traditional students. For a variety of reasons, off-campus minority students require a unique type of education--one that will fit into a complex life style.

A composite profile of this student would suggest certain characteristics. Very often, they are older; they are often part-time students; and they are considered by many to be educationally disadvantaged. These facts should suggest some implications for higher education in the coming years. We need to look at questions such as:

1. Does our present curriculum meet the needs of these students?
2. What kinds of educational materials and methods might be useful for working with non-traditional students?
3. Do campus facilities meet the needs of off-campus students?

The typical off-campus minority student has, in the past, often been culturally isolated from colleges and universities. Educational opportunities are now becoming available to a greater degree than ever before, and in the future we can expect even greater increases in numbers of non-traditional learners on campus. These students are often getting a "second chance" at education.

While full-time enrollment is declining in most colleges and universities throughout the nation, part-time enrollment is going up (Chronicle of Higher Education, May 4, 1981). One-third of all students enrolled in credit-bearing courses in colleges and universities today are over twenty-five years of age. The number of students who are thirty-five and older has increased to thirty-six and one-half percent in the last five years (Newsweek, December 21, 1981). This older student population has kept college enrollment from declining drastically in recent years, and according to the U. S. Census Bureau, there

are indications that the trend will continue. By 1986, it is expected that forty-eight percent of American college students will be part-time.

In addition to being older than the average student and enrolled only part-time, the average off-campus student is considered by many to be a disadvantaged learner. These students are apt to be more apprehensive about tasks, operations, and requirements than majority students. This apprehension, in turn, often restricts their willingness to aggressively attack academic tasks.

Social and economic factors are often sources of frustration for the minority student. Low levels of self-confidence and mistrust of others are characteristics shared by many. A number of problems are specifically difficult. Ever-increasing fares and long waiting periods for public transportation make this a difficult situation in many cities. The lack of student loans makes full-time work a necessity for some and part-time work a necessity for most. Concern for finances ranks high on the list of student priorities. Facilities on-campus are often inadequate,also. The absence of student lounges on many campuses increases the difficulty of the long hours. Educators are realizing that students attain only a surface of education when attention to such underlying problems are not addressed.

Good advising for these students becomes especially important. Advisors and counselors of off-campus minority students are charged with the task of not only giving sound academic advice, but also of helping students to raise levels of confidence. Taking risks, attacking problems aggressively, and raising questions regarding lessons are all too often reluctantly pursued by minorities who feel outside of their element in this new educational environment.

In spite of these liabilities, however, adult learners also bring assets to the university setting. They are usually very goal-oriented and practical

in their approach to university work. Generally, too, they are self-diciplined and are much aware of career needs.

These students can benefit from a variety of learning experiences. An area of technology that holds much promise for educating off-campus students is public television. The marriage of PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) and higher education has created an important medium for students who commute. Colleges and universities can now better serve the needs of adult learners who, because of other commitments, find it difficult to be on campus for regular classes. Colleges and universities using television courses report a high level of satisfaction from their students.

As a part of this study, a survey (see appendix) was developed in order to gather data on minority off-campus students. The data for this research was collected from off-campus, minority (Black, female) students at the McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The twenty-five students were randomly selected from more than two hundred Black off-campus students at this university.

The participants were between the ages of nineteen and fifty-five. Located in Southwest Louisiana, they commute from twenty to fifty miles one-way daily to get to the university. The majority of the students are single parents with elementary school-aged children.

Tables 1-5 in the appendix report findings of the survey, with a breakdown of responses to questions 1, 4, 9, 15, and 20. These questions seem to apply most directly to policies which could be implemented by most colleges and universities.

Seventy percent of the students surveyed would live on campus if they could afford to do so. Only five percent felt a full part of college activities, and eighty percent could not take part in extracurricular activities.

More than half the students surveyed (60%) felt that no special attention was being given to meet their needs as off-campus students.

It is important then that we redefine our role as educators in order to reconsider the needs of that segment of the student population which, busily involved with families and careers, cannot spend four years on campus as full-time students.

The development of a high-quality curriculum which fits into a degree program for adults, calls for a closer look at technology as a partial solution to the problem. The increased use of computers, radio, videocassette recorders and educational television programs could revolutionize the relationship between student and on-campus programs.

Some of the obvious advantages to off-campus students would include:

-more control over instruction time

-less wasted time spent on unnecessary travel to the university

-more individualization of instruction

The role of faculty members who participate in this type of program would change from primarily that of "lecturer" to that of resource person and instructional designer. The research and writing of curriculum materials by people who not only are specialists in their particular fields, but who also are well acquainted with the student population using the materials, should result in high-quality educational materials. A high degree of tutorial instruction could be achieved as students pace themselves through the course work. Opportunities must also be provided for student-instructor meetings for face-to-face encounters with problem-solving, discussion and examinations. A goal of this type of instruction would be to integrate the best of traditional educational principles with innovative approaches to the design and delivery of credit courses, a non-traditional program for non-traditional students.

TABLE 1

Item 1 The College curriculum offers special attention to the needs of off-campus students.

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	10	40.0
No	15	60.0
Total	25	100.0

N = 25

Table 1, question one, indicates frequency of responses for the provision made by the college curriculum with special attention to the needs of off-campus students. Fifteen (60 percent) of the students indicated no special attention was provided and ten (40 percent) indicated that special attention was given to needs of off-campus students.

TABLE 2

Item 4 As an off-campus student do you take part in as many of the extracurricula activities as on-campus students?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	5	20.0
No	20	80.0
Total	25	100.0

Table 2, question 4, indicated information pertinent to extracurricula activities of off-campus students. Twenty (80 percent) of the responding students indicated they do not take part in as many extracurricular activities as on-campus students and five (20 percent) indicated they do.

TABLE 3

Item 9 Does the time you spend commuting to campus and back influence your studying time?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	12	48.0
No	13	52.0
Total	25	100.00

Table 3, question 9, indicated information pertinent to commuting to and from the university influencing studying time. Thirteen students (52 percent) indicated it has no influence and twelve (48 percent) indicated it does.

TABLE 4

Item 15 Do you feel you are a full part of the university in all activities?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	15	60.0
No	5	20.0
No Response	5	20.0
Total	25	100.0

Table 4, question 15, reveals that of twenty-five respondents, fifteen (60 percent) of the participants replied that they feel they are a full part of the university in all activities and five (20 percent) feel they are not, the remaining five (20 percent) did not respond.

TABLE 5

Item 20 If you could afford it, would you be an on-campus student?

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	76.0
No	6	24.0
Total	25	100.0

Table 5, question 20, reveals that of the total number of respondents, nineteen (76 percent) indicated if they could afford it they would be on-campus students. Six (24 percent) indicated they would not due to other personal factors.

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